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IC 75-1392
7 March 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy to the DCI for the
Intelligence Community

SUBJECT: Comments on the Views Expressed in the
20 November Meeting of the NSCIC
Working Group

1. The discussion of 20 November covered a wide variety of overlapping subjects but divides logically into the following four main groupings:

a. Consumer feedback: the lack of adequate mechanisms to enable consumers to influence the scope, focus, etc., of the intelligence production process.

b. Consumer knowledgeability: the lack of consumer knowledge about the intelligence community and what it is doing. Without this knowledge, consumers cannot provide rational guidance to intelligence producers on what is needed.

c. Specific criticism of perceived weaknesses in intelligence products.

d. The Working Group's work program: how should it proceed to address the identified problems?

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Approved For Release 2003/04/01 : CIA-RDP84B00506R000100110013-9

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Approved For Release 2003/04/01 : CIA-RDP84B00506R000100110013-9

2. Consumer feedback

There was general agreement with Mr. Ellsworth's comment that "consumers lack a means of providing feedback to the community on its products." The following specific proposals were made:

--Messrs. Brown and Ober: Consumers should do post-mortems on NIEs.

Comment: ICS/PRD is an established mechanism to review and assess intelligence products, and the views of consumers are a major element of such reviews. PRD has not yet reviewed NIEs, but is planning to as part of its RONI work program. Whether on product generally or on crisis post-mortems, PRD would benefit from more systematic access to consumers.

Recommendation: That consumers not attempt to set up an independent evaluation system but provide a more systematic means of channeling their views on product to PRD. This might be done by Working Group members assigning to one individual the responsibility of initiating or channeling consumer views to PRD.*

*See the final Comment in this section for a major qualification to this recommendation.

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--Mr. Ellsworth: Consumers should help draft NIE terms of reference.

Comment: As Adm. Rectanus pointed out, NIE draft terms of reference are now circulated by NIOs to appropriate intelligence elements, who can (and should) get inputs from consumer elements of their departments. This system provides only for an indirect consumer influence and does not accommodate the views, for example, of the NSC. Apparently, what is sought is more direct contact between consumers and NIOs in the formulation of NIE terms of reference.

Recommendation: That the Working Group discuss the subject directly with the NIOs and propose a mechanism for conveying consumer views to them on NIE terms of reference. A focal point officer in each consumer agency (as proposed above) might be a useful mechanism to achieve this objective.

--Mr. Ellsworth: Might key consumers be allowed to review penultimate drafts of NIEs?

Comment: USIB member agencies review NIE drafts at various stages and are presumably in a position to inject into their reviews the views of the consumer elements of

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their departments. To permit consumers to directly influence the final judgments in NIEs, however, would inevitably raise a conflict of interest problem, i.e., the possibility that policy biases were distorting independent intelligence judgments.

Recommendation: That consumers not participate in the drafting and prepublication review of NIEs.

--Mr. Ober: KIQs should be prepared by consumers under the aegis of the Working Group.

Comment: The identification of KIQs is a function not only of consumer needs but also of intelligence community capabilities. Since the consumer is not qualified realistically to assess the latter, the concept of consumers preparing KIQs does not appear sound. The problem (if there is one) would appear to be one of inadequate means for consumers to convey their needs to the NIOs.

Recommendation: That the Working Group review the subject with the NIOs. Consumer focal point officers again might be the solution, by providing more direct and formal consumer review of KIQs.

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--Mr. Brown: State's major interest is to examine the current intelligence output and provide feedback to the community.

Comment: PRD is conducting a comprehensive and continuing review of current intelligence, but its findings (with a few spot exceptions) appear only in the RONI at infrequent intervals. Brown is probably thinking in terms of a continuing day-by-day feedback. Much of this already occurs through direct contact between State desk officers and intelligence analysts. It appears to us that the initiative for any improvement in this area must rest primarily with the consumers, i. e., by continually telling the analysts and producers of current intelligence what they want.

Recommendation: That consumer focal point officers convey to NIOs on a continuing basis the needs of their principals for current intelligence--this system to supplement the ongoing contacts between consumers and analysts/producers at a lower level.

--Mr. Ober: The consumer should participate in community reviews related to product changes (e. g., recent revision of NIB procedures).

Comment: Most reviews of this kind are initiated in response to the perceived needs of consumers. It might be useful to obtain a more formal and direct expression of consumer views when such a review is contemplated, but consumers should probably not participate in the development of the new mechanisms.

Recommendation: That when USIB initiates a review of a particular publication (e. g., the NIB, a National Crisis SITREP, etc.) the NSCIC Working Group should be so informed and invited to submit comments to the ad hoc committee (or whatever) charged with the review.

--Mr. Morrell: Each member of the Working Group should select the products which are most important to him, develop a critique, and circulate it to the other members.

Comment: This proposal (except for the final clause) appears to us eminently sensible and the heart of the matter. The problem of consumer feedback is essentially one of substance--not mechanisms. If consumers would simply produce critiques, assessments, evaluations of intelligence products, there would be no problem in ensuring that they

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got fed back to the community. There is nothing now to prevent any consumer, whether in the NSC, State, or DoD, from sending the DCI a memorandum or a study saying I don't like your latest NIE on China for the following reasons. These views would immediately be passed on to the appropriate NIOs, to PRD for integration into its own reviews as appropriate, and to those elements of the production community directly responsible for the product under review. (The idea of Working Group members circulating consumer critiques among themselves sounds incestuous and of little benefit either to the intelligence or consumer communities.) In an earlier comment in this section we opposed the setting up of special consumer mechanisms to produce post-mortems on NIEs. We do not oppose, but rather encourage, consumers to produce individual critiques of specific products.

Recommendation: That the members of the Working Group encourage their principals to critique intelligence products and forward them directly to the DCI, the NIOs, or the ICS--or to all three.

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3. Consumer knowledgeability

It was clear from the discussion that consumers believe that one reason for their inability to provide effective feedback to the intelligence community is that they are not kept adequately informed what the community is doing or how it operates.

--Messrs. Ellsworth and Ober, Adm. Hilton: Consumers often have difficulty finding out who to ask to respond to their intelligence needs. They proposed that the intelligence community take the initiative with briefings or, preferably, a handbook for consumers on the allocation of production responsibilities, status of capabilities, etc.

Comment: There are a variety of things that could be done to meet this need. Briefings could be arranged and handbooks produced. The NIOs' Status of Work in Process provides a detailed schedule of national products just produced or in preparation. Other production elements such as OPR and DIA produce similar schedules. The problem, it seems to us, is not in developing the information but in identifying the audience. Who are the consumers that need briefings, handbooks, and production schedules?

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Recommendation: That focal point officers in consumer agencies identify what each of their agencies needs and levy their requirements on the Intelligence Community Staff (PRD) for this kind of support. PRD would act as broker for all elements of the community.

4. Specific criticisms

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(Note: HUMINT related items have been addressed by

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in a separate memo.)

--Mr. Ellsworth recited a list of the SECDEF's needs for intelligence, indicating explicitly or implicitly that the production community was not meeting them.

Comment: Presumably requirements of this nature are well known to the NIOs and the production managers of the community and are reflected in the KIQs and other requirements documents. If special problems exist, they should be communicated to the community--either directly to the DCI or appropriate NIOs or through DIA to USIB. The NSCIC Working Group would not appear to be the appropriate mechanism for reviewing specific requirements.

Recommendation: That on issues of this nature the Working Group members be encouraged to discuss them directly with the NIOs.

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--Several of the members criticized different aspects of current intelligence publications, e.g., the desirability of lowering their classification to permit wider distribution, the need for more analysis and assessment, the possibility of reducing the number of daily publications (from three to one), and the possibility of eliminating multiple crisis SITREPs.

Comment: All of these issues are being actively reviewed by PRD--some in inter-agency working groups. As indicated earlier, the views of consumers on these matters should be solicited and usually are, but we do not believe consumers should participate directly in the review process.

Recommendation: That consumers convey their views on these matters to that element of the community (ICS/PRD) which is directly involved in reviewing them.

--Two analytical problems were raised. Mr. Ellsworth thought that more qualifications and limitations should be applied to particular analytical judgments (i.e., measuring uncertainty). Mr. Morrell was concerned that it was sometimes not possible to determine whether a judgment in a finished product was made by the Washington analyst or the field reporter (e.g., an Ambassador).

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Comment: We question whether problems of this kind can be addressed by the community in any systematized way. We tend to believe they should be documented by consumers and brought to the attention of appropriate elements of the community on a continuing basis as they occur.

Recommendation: That focal point officers in consumer agencies channel these criticisms, perhaps through ICS/PRD, to intelligence elements concerned.

--Mr. Ellsworth: Some finished products lose timeliness because of delays in the coordination process or (for some consumers) because of delays in sanitizing versions for consumers not cleared for highly sensitive material.

Comment: While these points are probably valid, it is difficult to see what could be done procedurally to overcome them. If consumers know in advance what estimates are in the mill and are in effective informal contact with producers, they can keep abreast of community judgments before the papers are officially produced.

Recommendation: That consumers, possibly through a focal point officer, develop and maintain close contact with the NIOs and other key production officers in the community.

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5. The Working Group's work program

The discussion in this area was inconclusive; it was generally agreed that the minutes of the meeting should be examined carefully before deciding what to undertake as projects. Specific comments were as follows:

--Mr. Ober: Suggested a paper be prepared on how consumers are to provide guidance. He agreed with the need for firm and specific proposals, but he hoped the Group would not get involved in detailed analysis. He thought the Group could develop specific recommendations on current intelligence dailies. He said that a sub-group should look at NIEs. He thought the Group should stimulate and organize critiques of NIEs (not conduct them).

--Mr. Brown: He also thought the Group should examine both the current intelligence dailies and the NIEs.

--Adm. Hilton: He opposed the Group getting involved in assessments of NIEs. He thought a good first step would be a briefing on the estimative process.

--Gen. Wilson: He said he was inclined to favor sub-groups but felt that care should be taken to define precisely what was to be done, what the end product should be, and who could best do it. He would expect individual members to

12
Approved For Release 2003/04/01 : CIA-RDP84B00506R000100110013-9

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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handle specific tasks. In some cases, he expected the Intelligence Panel would be given the task. In response to Adm. Hilton's suggestion, he agreed to arrange a briefing on the estimative process.

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